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ABSTRACT

Religious symbol systems have the capacity to bring into place superordinate constructions of reality. One interesting construction of reality has been developed by the Unity School of Christianity, organized in the second half of the nineteenth century and perhaps the most successful of organized groups within the American New Thought/Metaphysical movement. Interviews were completed with ten movement participants, members of a Unity satellite organization in a midwest American city, as a follow-up to rhetorical analysis of Unity's premiere publication, "Daily Word Magazine." Data showed that (1) participants' responses indicate rational understanding of the manifest thematic content of the "Daily World" discourse; (2) respondents, in accordance with the ultimate framework of Unity, appear to accept the responsibility that to give expression to spiritual heritage, one must recognize Truth as principle and law of the universe; (3) respondents embrace a new spiritual identity as "Truth Students," which means to achieve redemption as they transcend the frustrations, contradictions, and conflicts of social life; (4) respondents understand they are using attention-shifting as a rhetorical strategy to progress in the ability to know and perceive in a spiritual way; and (5) respondents see themselves as Truth Students participating actively in a rhetorical drama. (Twenty-one notes are included.) (MS)

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The Meaning of Meaning: The Life-Worlds of Some Unity School Truth Drama Participants

a paper
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ABSTRACT

The Meaning of Meaning: The Life-Worlds of Some Unity School Truth Drama Participants

In developing religious symbol systems the human animal seeks to make experience meaningful and to create a world that is orderly. For many people, the motives derived from religion inform the action of every day life; creating identity, providing a conception of individual purpose, and establishing relationship to others. Indeed, such systems have the special capacity to bring into place superordinate constructions of reality. This paper considers one such construction as it emerges through the resources of language in the discourse of Unity School of Christianity's Daily Word Magazine.

Unity, a Christian metaphysical sect, was organized in the second half of the nineteenth century as part of the American New Thought Movement. In the pages of its primary rhetorical vehicle, Daily Word, Unity School continues to inspire a social drama that has invited international participation reported in the millions. The life-worlds of ten participants in this drama is considered here. The data for the analysis was gathered from extensive interviews.

THE MEANING OF MEANING: THE LIFE-WORLDS OF SOME UNITY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY DRAMA PARTICIPANTS

"Until we know what others think they know, we cannot truly understand their acts."1 These words of Walter Lippman suggest if we wish to know the meaning of rhetorical drama in individual human experience our analysis seems most vital when criticism can bring to view something of the life-worlds of participants in a rhetorical movement. Specifically, through participation in collective religious behavior, individuals make sense of their lives. Religious reality-making, as does any other kind, provides foremost for the individuals a way of "seeing" self, others and the world; and offers directions for a way of acting in the world; a sense of one's place in and relationship to the world. Classically, among others, Allport, Klapp, and Duncan have described this phenomenon in similar fashion as Bryan Wilson who writes that sects provide their participants with a "strong sense of self-identification" and with a "strong conception of us." Sects represent the efforts of persons on a conscious level to build societies with "firm sets of values and mores," and "are an almost natural affirmation [of] our desire to establish conceptual order...to seek firm boundaries and unambiguous categories."2

Thus, participation in rhetorical movements portends powerful and significant outcomes for the life of the individual. Participant self-reports make it possible to appreciate such outcomes, for as Duncan says, "all we know about the meaning of what happened or is happening....is what someone says about its meaning."3 To tap into subjective experience enhances the critics ability to discover the motive context for rhetorical action. This paper considers the "meanings" that are the substance of the symbolic reality of some

participants in the Unity School of Christianity; perhaps the most successful of organized group within the American New Thought/ Metaphysical movement. Interviews were completed with ten movement participants as a follow up to rhetorical analysis of Unity's premiere publication, Daily Word Magazine. All interview subjects were members of a Unity satellite organization in a midwest American city. Each had participated in a survey of the local membership and volunteered to provide additional information in the context of an interview.

First, it will be useful to outline the rhetorical character of Unity's Daily Word discourse. Daily Word has been published since 1924 and circulated in 166 countries with a subscription level (by the middle of the current decade) of two million. Critical analysis of its discourse over the period 1976 to 1980 revealed the following:
The Unity School of Christianity Daily Word discourse primarly, is based upon the conception of God as principle or law; distinguishing itself as "Practical Christianity" and unlike traditional Christian doctrines which, in general, personalize God. Although Unity began in the 19th century as a healing ministry, economic prosperity seems a prominent focus in the discourse today. The term prosperity, however is interpreted in DW to imply "all good."

Unlike traditional Christianity, Unity does not accept evil as a power or reality in and of itself; rather, evil exists, receives force, and operates because of the individual's belief in it. Thought, it is held, has power to form, to bring into sense experience both good and evil. The notion of heaven and hell as actual spatial locations where one eternally, is rewarded or punished is rejected.

Sin is the continuation in thought of ideas and beliefs that are contrary to Truth. "Truth" is the summarizing term by which Unity refers to its system of metaphysical beliefs. Sin, therefore, is ignorance of Truth. Sin as erroneous thought is believed the cause of disease, poverty, and in general, the absence of good because one is out of the state of "at-onement" with God. Salvation is an adjustment of such thought practices, an allignment of thought with Truth. The DW Truth is an interpretation of Jesus' teachings by Unity School founder Charles Fillmore.

Finally, the themes and value norms of the Truth rhetoric are sufficiently generalized to reflect a traditional religious/Christian orientation and culturally broad enough to minimize potential devotees from "defining-out" or excluding themselves from the audience. The goals of the discourse are consistent with images in the "American dream," the "good life," the success ethic and in short -- the general ends common to human society -- health, pleasure, comfort, safety, happiness, and prosperity.

Rhetorically, the Unity Truth system is a transcendent message and strategy for social redemption. The way out of guilt, that is, the way out of sickness, failure and deprivation of any kind is a change in one's thinking. Using Kenneth Burke's terminology of "frame" and "framework" the Truth motivational context can be set forth.

The ultimate frame with its derivative frames constitute the larger symbolic context or framework. Each is a constituent of the whole, each represents the details and particulars of the whole. The Unity Ultimate Frame, ontologically based, embodies the dialectic of the natural and the supernatural and can be stated in this wise:

God/Spirit is the divine, the good, the one and only substance of all the universe, of all being.

This frame is the principle of principles; the source from which all subsequent Truth statements are derived. It contains the ultimate term: God/Spirit, substance of being. This is Truth as stated in Daily Word, "God's perfection underlies all creation...harmonizing and making all things right.[4]

The first derivative frame is axiological in nature and embodies the dialectic of the ideal and the practical and is stated thusly:

The individual is an element of being, reflecting the divinity of spiritual substance; and therefore, has the innate desire and capacity for divine expression (perfection); the will to all good, health, prosperity, and whatever makes for happiness.

Spiritual identity implied in the Ultimate Frame is extended now in explicit manner to the individual. The DW instructs, "I am an expression of God,"[5] and "my very existence is in God."[6] The outline of role with its rights and responsibilites, and--significantly--goals and values emerges in this frame. The second derivatiave of the Ultimate Frame is epistemological in nature and embodies the dialectic of the mystical and the rational and can be represented in this fashion:

In material reality, the world of appearance, the perfection of God/Spirit is not always apparent to the senses; but despite appearance Good (that is, God and the outworking of His will -- perfection) is always present, ready to be demonstrated (brought into sense awareness) by those who persist in knowledge of and faith in Truth.

The nature of knowledge is treated in this frame. Illustratively, the DW informs, "the mind of God in me enables me to pierce the darkness of human thought and to see clearly, to lift my thinking from limited human levels to the level of spiritual insight, spiritual power, spiritual wisdom and knowledge."[7]

Taken together this is the Truth rhetorical framework, its motive context. From my study of DW which began over a decade ago, I have observed the frames to be central and consistently repeated. We now can examine the meaning of such a motivational context in the experience of some Truth Students, the name movement participants give themselves.

Summary and Discussion of Interview Responses

The following represents the categorizations the writer has made of participants' self-statements; the thematic configurations emerging from interview responses. In the interviews the writer sought to ascertain Truth participants' knowledge of the manifest content of the Truth ultimate framework; the meaning for them of Truth as an order of social integration; and some explanation of how Truth "Students" participation is attracted and maintained.

The Manifest Content of Daily Word Discourse, Boundaries of the Unity Truth Drama as Summarized From Interviews.

The qualities of the spiritual life were cited by those interviewed as Love, Prosperity, Success, Faith, Healing, Positive attitude, Belief in God, Belief in Self, Joy in the Lord, Happiness, Prayer, Courage, Forgiveness, and Perfection. God qualities were seen to be Love. Absolute good, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence. One

respondent described an adjusted relationship with God, "I previously lived by a very negative attitude...so to find Unity...looking on the bright side, and knowing that God doesn't have to forgive you because He was never mad at you...and that God wants you to be happy was a sure help to me."

At heart the message of Daily Word for those interviewed was summarized by them as, "I build my world with my thoughts;" "The power of thought;" "The power of the word in mind action;" "Illumination of the individual mind with light and understanding;" "We're children of God...all one with God." "We are potentially perfect;" "Encouragement...keep on keeping on;" "Positive attitude; opportunity for new beginning;" "Power of thought; thoughts bring about things;" "Omnipresence and omnipotence of God;" "Forgiveness; learning to love each person as self because all are part of the whole;" "Love, faith, light, understanding;" "Love, prosperity, faith;" "Faith, belief, love, success;" "Prosperity, healing, encouragement;" "Joy, prosperity, order, faith;" "Prosperity, healing."

And in somewhat extended fashion one interview respondent provided this summary of the Daily Word message, "Everybody gets discouraged....It's not always easy to stay in that high consciousness no matter how much you meditate...And so they offer what I call, little pep thing in the Magazine each month. And they tell you how wonderful you are. They tell you that you are a child of God. They tell you that you are one with God...that you are from God...Don't be anxious; don't be worried. They tell you if you're worried about your children, about your husband, about anybody 'behold the Christ in them'...Keep

on, look up; and do the best you can. It's going to work out for you."

In statements to the writer, respondents reflected an awareness of Truth consistent with the aspects of the rhetoric's manifest content as outlined. Generally, Truth was understood as a hybrid of traditional religious Christian values and roles and "the good life" or success ethic. For example, love, faith, and prayer exist alongside health, wealth, success, and happiness as central themes of Truth.

In living out the religious and moral implications of Truth, participants seem to aspire at once to exhibit the "fruits of the Spirit" -- those fruits now being what can be subsumed under the term "prosperity." "There is plenty and (there is) supply." God, it would appear, is understood by the respondents as "Love," "Absolute Good," "Omnipotent," "Omnipresent," and, in line with the Ultimate Frame of the rhetoric," to be the Substance of all being.

In agreement with the first derivative frame, respondents saw themselves as aspects of the Divine Substance: "We're children of God; all one with God." "We are potentially perfect." "...Learning to love each person as self because all are part of the whole."

If one recalls the Ultimate Frame and the first derivative frame (God, the Divine, the Good, is Spirit and the one and Only Substance of all Being; and the individual, an element of Being, reflects the divinty of God Substance, and therefore has the innate desire and capacity for divine expression (perfection), the will to all good, health, prosperity, and whatever makes for happiness), it is apparent that in these, individual being is defined as divine; thus the frames provide the entitlement to claim the way of life epitomized as Truth. The religious/Christian boundaries are, as well, the means of securing entitlement.

Again, love, faith, prayer, joy, belief in God, positive attitude, forgiveness, and courage are all valued instrumentally, the means of propelling participants onward to claim their inheritance. The certainty of periods of discouragement is accepted, even anticipated. But the Daily Word is always there to rally the Truth Student and reenforce the vision of Truth.

The Ultimate Frame and its first derivative are structured, respectively, around philosophical questions of being and valuing. That interview respondents have made the leap of faith required by the rhetoric to resolve the dialectic in each question is apparent. The question of value posed as the polarity of the ideal or the practical finds respondents answering, "I build my world with my thoughts." And, "Thoughts bring about things." The "good life," success, prosperity, perfection in body, mind, and affairs are essentially ideals held attainable in the "here and now" as the fruit of the spiritual existence. "There is plenty and (there is) supply." "We are potentially perfect."

As to the dialectic of being, the natural and supernatural, Truth participants report a unitary essence as the quality of being. The worlds either of religion or science are fraught with inconsistencies, but the transcendent spiritual world if one of "perfect being" where science and religion are encompassed. "God is love and omnipresent." "We're children of God...all one with God."

The "perfect-ness" of Truth as a superordinate construction of social reality for respodents perhaps can be seen more fully in this next category of responses. "Consecration," Duncan writes, "is the apogee of an 'Upward Way'."[8] To uphold social order is to consecrate

the "purity of sacred names." In so doing, each social institution strives to create symbols which align it with universal symbols of social order:

> The sociological function of the dramatistic structure of action is, therefore an act of organization. If symbols are to remain powerful in organizing social relationship, they must inspire belief in their capacity to consecrate certain styles of life as the "true" source of order in society. For it is because of this 'purity' that they can be used to consecrate actions believed necessary to social solidarity.[9]

The Consecration of a Way of Life

Interview respondents characterize the essence of the Daily Word/Unity Truth Philosophy variously as, "The Way;" "A way of life;" "Practical belief;" "Self-help;" "Successful living;" "Positive mental, spiritual attitude;" "Spiritual laws...unchanging quality...the God Principle;" "True state of nature...principle of order in the universe;" "One aspect of God being;" "The spirit of God is within each person...the divine within;" "The teachings of Jesus;" "We can exhibit the characteristics of Jesus;" and finally as, "An unchanging something that always if, that always was, and always will be."

Origins and Validity of Truth

The majority of interview respondents (nine) equated Daily Word Truth with Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, qualifying that the Fillmores derived Truth from interpretations of the Bible. Yet, nearly all of the group saw the Fillmore/Bible ideas as reflective of a universe knowledge that can be known intuitively by all persons. Truth has "always been out there." Yet Charles and Myrtle Fillmore "were special people with a mis. "

The acceptance of Truth as reality is suggested in such statements as, "People began responding to me differently;" "I applied it to life threatening situations;" "I saw other people living it;" and, "I consciously sought to study and apply it."

Other statements exhibit a faith and determination in holding to Truth; for example, "I find that if I am persistent enough in my thoughts I can control my destiny. I just get careless sometimes...but I have really learned to use it;" "I can't prove it. I haven't been able to demonstrate it, but there's something that tells me it's right;" "It's unchanging and the Truth is something that works...The only time when it doesn't work is when you doubt that it will;" and "In Unity if you have a problem there is a solution."

Comparison of Truth and Other Religious/Philosophical Systems

Beyond the statements, "Truth is like other beliefs except others use different words;" and "All religions have a belief in God," interview respondents appear to view the system as utterly superior to other beliefs. Consider such characterizations as, "Freedom to grow in Truth;" "It doesn't prescribe;" Truth is "non-orthodox;" Truth "doesn't give dogmas;" and Truth is "relevant."

Respondents continue, Truth is "practical...it works in everyday life;" Truth has an "openess, newness...not traditional;" Truth has "no confinement to dogmas, no limits;" Truth provides a "better understanding of beliefs...a chance to learn." Truth has "no hypocrisy;" Truth is a "different approach;" Truth is based on "metaphysical interpretations versus literal interpretation of scripture;" finally, Truth is "self-directed; inner-directed versus being told what to do, think, or how to act."

Unity participants apparently give witness to the belief that Truth is the way it really is when they respond that the Daily Word is "The Way;" the "True state of nature;" "the principle of order in the Universe;" "an unchanging something that always is, that always was and always will be." Their belief does seem significant in light of further statements that suggest motivation to fulfill the goals and roles of the Truth hierarchy of order: "We can exhibit the characteristics of Jesus;" "The spirit of God is within each person;" "successful living;" "self-help;" and "positive mental, spiritual attitude."

Perhaps one of the more powerful goads is this universal symbol Truth. Are there times or places in which societies have not sought to identify their claims with what is true? For the Unity participant the potency of the name seems to come less from its universality than from the common-sense, day to day experience of each. The Daily Word rhetoric's first derivative frame, embodying a dialectic of the ideal and the practical, comes into place here. The conflict of these is resolved by a spiritual hierarchy that exhorts each person to rise up to Divine life, to a Spiritual reality where perfection is attainable in the here and now.

Having accepted the exhortation,--and how can one searching for truth not seek to prove the claims of this order when practical experience for these participants seems to give credence--they answer "I applied it to emotional problems, crises, traumatic situations;" "I saw other people living it;" "I find that if I am persistent enough in my thoughts I can control my destiny...I have really learned to use it."

Always, the responsibility to prove the Truth rests with the individual; the goad to assume responsibility, in my estimation, is sufficiently powerful that the individual is compelled over and over again to continue trying. "I just get careless at times;" "I haven't been able to demonstrate it, but there's something that tells me it's right;" "The only time when it doesn't work is when you doubt;" In Unity if you have a problem there is a solution." In all such expressions the "purity" remains in the "Truth;" any "impurity" resides in the imperfect practice of it.

Related to the consecrational potency of symbols is the hierarchical status of symbols. Status of course, is derived from relative position--one thing in relation to another. The status of Truth is honored by participants as an evidently superior system of order: "a better understanding of beliefs;" "relevant;" "no hypocrisy;" "no confinement to dogmas;" "freedom;" "practical.'

Such terms reveal perceptions of some other principles of order as "lesser lights." Previous systems of identifications which were left behind by the interviewees included Mormon, Catholic, Baptist, and Pentecostal Christian affiliations. These somehow did not evoke the devotion, the consecration needed to maintain the participation of those interviewed. A "falling away," if at no other time, can occur when there is basic conflict or disturbance of some kind in one's life.

People come into rhetorical movements because of felt conflict and from crisis as they attempt to live up to societal norms. King sees crisis resulting from unmet cultural group expectations and an attending persistent frustration.[10] Along this line Rueckert has developed Kenneth Burke's idea of social guilt, "Every hierarchy is

experienced by a man as a kind of covenant, but no man is capable of meeting all the terms of the agreement and in some way will fail or disobey. Failure and disobedience--the "fall"--cause guilt which in turn makes necessary the whole machinery of catharsis."[11]

Motives and their intensity will vary from each individual participant in the movement, but crisis is requisite. Crisis is equivalent to guilt--"negation of the principles of social order and their expression in hierarchy. We believe we should be identifying with such a principle, but we are not."[12] Guilt as a state of "social disrelationship"[13] or "embarrassment"[14] implies redemption. To join a rhetorical movement a person "must not only sense a problem, but must also (1) feel that something can be done about it and (2) wants to do something about it himself. At the very least, he must feel that the status quo is not inevitable, and that change is conceivable."[15]

The Attraction and Maintenance of Truth Drama Participants: Guilt and Redemption

Respondents dramatically describe their life experience before and after coming to know truth in such terms as, "I was in a rut, very bored...few friends;" "A terrible negative period;" "Health problems;" "I had gone as low as I could go;" I had a really bad experience. If I hadn't to, I really wouldn't have wanted to live."

Poignantly, others relate, "I strained and sweated and tried; and I followed all the rules. But it still didn't come out right. I was adrift;" "I was struggling...trying to make a living, trying to live right; trying to contain my health. I was so frustrated...in turmoil, trying to figure out what's the next move;" "Marital problems;" "I was

just floundering around with my life;" "I lived in constant fear...anger and resentment;" "Physically, I was dying. Spiritually I was already dead;" "My life was unmanageable."

Truth embraced, they proclaim: "It just gives me a good feeling and a good understanding of why I'm here and my purpose;" "My whole life has changed. I have gone to a new dimension of living. Life is fun, life is great and it's always fulfilling; it's changing, increasingly more abundant. It's better;" "I've taken a better look at myself and I realize that that's the only thing I can change...then I can be in peace and harmony;" "God has lit up my life;" "My life has unfolded much like the petals of a rose or the flower or a fruit. I have peace of mind, contentment. My worries are minor, my health is good."

In the voice of hope and with the vision of new life, we hear, "I have changed quite a bit. It changed my whole life;" "I'm happier and I enjoy life better because I better understand how to keep myself from getting all tangled up in the emotions of my surroundings and to live better toward my neighbors;" "There's been a great deal of growth taking place in me. I've found a lot of understanding about myself and the world around me. I've become more positive...a lot happier and free flowing;" "My life has changed...I changed my thinking and I was able to think a lot better of people. I was better able to manage my own feeling...to not dwell so much in negativeness and to draw on positive, uplifting, constructive concepts...It's making me more aware of who I am in my relationship to God;" "I've improved in health...we're recognizing prosperity."

Reasons For Reading Daily Word

The interview respondents cite explicitly practical motives for reading Daily Word such as [It] "Gives a good feeling;" "a positive lift;" "Reinforces beliefs, makes life easier to function and to work;" "Keeps us on track; a roadmap; a daily reminder that we are better than we appear to be and we can do more than we're doing. We can love more than we're loving."

Similarly, other responses indicate the publications provides, "Comfort, direction, inspiration, so many good things;" "Gives a good feeling, positive lift;" "A lift; gets me going;" "Uplift; happy day;" "Uplift and encouragement;" "Spiritual guidance, centering/direction;" and "Reinforcement of truth."

Interview respondents describe the personal experience of guilty disrelationship variously: "I was in a rut, very bored...few friends;" "I had gone as low as I could go;" "I strained and sweated...I followed all the rules. But it still didn't come out right;" "I was struggling...trying to make a living, trying to live right; trying to contain my health. I was so frustrated."

As representative of the Unity rhetoric of transcendence, the Daily Word responds to the need for redemption from dislocation as it offers a "new position of social grace"[16] and new identifications: "My whole life has changed. I have gone to a new dimension of living. Life is fun, life is great and it's always fulfilling; it's changing, increasingly more abundant. It's better;" "My life has unfolded. I have peace of mind. My worries are minor. My health is good:" "We're recognizing prosperity."

This response from one of the Daily Word interview participants seems to epitomize the transformation of frustration and guilt by a transcendent rhetoric:

> My entire life has changed. I am not pessimistic; I don't get depressed as often. I don't get frustrated as often, and when I do it doesn't last as long. I now allow myself to have dreams, I allow myself to be interested in myself, to think that there's hope for the future, for my children, to believe that I have a purpose. It's given me a whole new lease on life and it's affected everything; the way I think, the way I feel when I'm alone. I like myself better. It gives me a certain peace. And it's just really done a lot for me.

This participant like the others interviewed, characterized their "now" life experience in terms suggestive of a redeemed self, a new person, a new life.

In this listing of responses, the strong current of the "in-forming" nature of identity rhetoric can be heard. That formative motive is seen more fully in the identity conferred by the Truth drama. To assume one's place in a spiritual world is to accept a new definition of self, one in agreement with the new principles of order and in new relationships to others. One must now <u>be spiritual</u>, thinking spiritually, acting spiritually. And to take one's place in the Divine Order, one has to deny the old patterns of thought and belief. These are the sacrifices necessary for transformation. In the denial of the former, the Spiritual, the <u>Upward Way</u> is affirmed.

Identity and Relationship: I Am / We Are / They Are

The appropriation of personal identity as Truth Students is apparent in these statements: Truth students have "higher consciousness;" Truth students have a "special spark," "special smile," "special look about them;" Turth students have a "positive attitude;" Truth students "attend to spiritual things;" Truth students have "higher understanding," "spiritual insight;" Truth students are in "a learning process;" Truth students are "more understanding, tolerant, less critical, sincere, open." Truth students have "a knowledge of God within," "an inner direction;" Truth students "give full expression to their capacities;" Truth students "recognize the good in others," "focus on self, rather than what others may, may not be doing."

Perceptions of Life Experience of Non-Truth Students

The distinctiveness of membership in the Truth Student/Daily Word is heard in these estimations of life on the outside: "It's plastic. It's a very shallow existence;" "Those in Unity reflect something special. Others will find Truth when they're ready--in them;" "Frustrating. I think we'll all find our truth in our own way and it doesn't have to be through the Daily Word." "Their life is on the outside;" "Just like taking a ship and putting it on an ocean during a hurricane, without a crew or a course. It's battered from side to side."

"Because they don't believe in truth nothing is wrong with them...no worse off than I am;" "Everybody has their way to go;" "It has to be confusing and frustrating...they're grabbing after material goods when what they really want is some inner fulfillment;" "I will not

attack anyone else..although I think they could do better;" Everybody has special qualities, but..."

These various self-categorizing statements by Unity participants feature a transformed identity in contrast to the old self, the guilt burdened self. Having seen Truth, the Upward Way, Truth students recognize that their new identity must show forth the grace of salvation. It is a Truth Student who walks therein, in the way revealed. Interview respondents: "marked-off" those on the path of the Upward Way as having "higher understanding," "a positive attitude," as being "more tolerant, sincere, open;" and as possessing "spiritual insight." Truth Students "attend to spiritual things." They have "a knowledge of God within," "an inner-direction."

Just as status is a relative item, so is identity. The individual self is defined in relationship with others. "Communication involves participation in the other. This, in turn requires the appearance of the other in the self, the identification of the other with the self and the reaching of self-consciousness through the other."[17] In ascribing attributes to non-Truth Students, participants also locate self-identity. Truth Students are "more understanding;" "less critical;" have "higher consciousness;" "focus on self rather than on what others may be doing;" "have a special spark."

Explicitly such self-definitions carry a comparison of the Truth participant to the non-participant. One cannot identify the self without identifying the other. The caharacterizations by Truth participants of "outsiders" is notable. Generally, the lives of these are seen as "plastic," "frustrating," "confusing," as lacking in some way. Indeed, it would seem that participants have characterized their

own-experiences--the life of the old self and former identity. Transformation requires renunciation of the former when and wherever met; whether as memory of a personal past or projection of it onto others. Some respondents seemed emphatic, clearly in "remembrance of things past," as they declined to judge "others." As represented by one respondent, "I think we all find our truth in our own way."

Several respondents characterized the identity of Truth participants consistently with that already presented as emerging from Daily Word. Essential identifying qualities can be seen which point to the inculcation of a new way of viewing self. The emphasis on the spiritual in responses points back to the Ultimate Frame of the discourse concerned with being. With spiritual identity embraced, participants seek to spiritualize themselves.

The first derivative frame and its concern with value is apparent in those responses in which Truth Students "give full expression of capacities"--the goal of realizing the implications of a spiritual ontology here and now. And last, the second derivative frame, with its concern for epistemology, is evidenced in Truth participants' responses that speak to "understanding," "knowledge," and "direction."

The self-categorizing responses above suggest that these Truth Drama participants have "in-formed" themselves in relative degrees in accordance with the claims of the rhetoric. Specific responses that Truth Students have higher understanding and spiritual insight, and that Truth Students are in a learning process lead to the final consideration in this examination of self-reports.

William Brown has described a phenonenom he terms "attention shifting" -- a kind of symbolic mediatory action, "a grand strategy for the rhetoric of social intervention.[18] In a situation where at least two interpretive patterns are available for sizing up a situation; where each pattern alone can make sense of the situation; and where one interpretive pattern is abandoned and a second embraced, an "attention switch" has been effected.[19]

When there is a perceived difference in the claims of a body of discourse and the common sense experience of its participants an anomaly or gap thus occurs. Rhetorical effort must be mounted in such occurrences to maintain participants' allegiance. The second derivative frame of the DW discourse, espousing a spiritual means of knowing is such an effort mounted in the unity movement to mask gaps and anomalies as they evidence themselves in the experience of unity followers. Thus, when sickness, failure, or any form of guilt evidences itself, spiritual knowledge, a higher transcendent way of knowing is evoked. A shift of attention from common sense awareness to higher spiritual consciousness masks the gap perceived in experience. The following self-reports give indication of the potency of the attention-shift as a rhetorical strategy and allow us to see the richness of meaning of DW rhetoric for the subjects in this study.

The Attention Shift: Strategy For Reenforcing A Transcendent Message; Indication of Switching by Interview Respondents.

"In Unity we always believe that there is no lack and there is always divine order in all situations. So that we have to kind of look at every situation and know that something good will come of it...What we have to do is look at the inner part and know that whatever happens will be positive and good, and people will learn from the situation. We know there is seeming illness, but the divine within us is always healthy and prosperous. So as the human part of us kind of creeps in, we see the negativity and we see the lack. I think that Daily Word helps us and reminds there is good in every situation and in every person."

.....

"I feel that some of these things are brought about as challenges for us to learn and grow...According to your belief, be it done unto you...It's according to how we can tune into these ideas. Because God made us perfect in spirit, the spiritual man is perfect."

.....

"We're children of God and God created everything. He created an abundance of everything and some of these things are challenges. The energy crisis is stimulating man to utilize the faculties that he has to develop the things that are there. We may exhaust some supply that was readily available, but exhausting that, we put ourselves in the position to explore deeper and find something that is even a greater power and a better source of energy. As far as the isms, there are not isms when you're all one. There's no 'you can't do this because you're a woman or I'm limited and I can't explore my full potential because I'm black.'

We don't feel that way. We feel that we're all equal and we all have the same opportunities. We all have the potential...We don't use our potential. We only tap maybe a tenth of our abilities but once we do, sometimes challenges come to make us go deeper into ourselves and to find our real potential. There is plenty. There is no need to be poverty stricken. People that are taken out of a poverty area and put into a nicer environment will ultimately go back to the same way of living unless they change their thinking...Changing the external is not going to make any difference..."

.....

"To truly help the world you must try yourself to be the best person that you can. It's almost impossible for the average person to address the large issues, but if enough persons addressed them personally, there's a solution...God's will for us is perfection, wholeness, health, and prosperity...People who are lacking anything don't know the Truth. As they learn the truth they'll be freed from their problems."

.....

"There's no shortage of anything...of energy...of love. It's the narrow view that certain races of people or people have. It's an appearance. As we are taught in Truth, it isn't real. God made all men equal. There's only one mind, one great mind and the mind that each of us has is a part of that one God-mind...see as a man thinketh, so is he. What you think about all day is what you end up being, unhealthy or healthy, wealthy or poor."

.....

"It bothers me...at Unity when it comes to world affairs they don't seem to take too much part in them and they don't speak or say that much about them. They feel like that's all going to pass over. I don't...feel that way...I think it's all going to come to a head one of these days. Unity teaches you that illness is through the mind and you do it yourself, but I have problem myself and I'm sure I'm not thinking them. I don't think everyone can be healthy."

.....

"I get frightened when I see all of the things that are happening. It makes me beleive people just do not want to give themselves to God which would bring nothing but love and understanding and well-being. Daily Word...teaches you to live a better life, and if you would of these things you wouldn't be so much in strife. People just don't understand how to live and they seem like they don't want to be instructed or given any help which the Daily Word does do every day."

.....

"Maybe if I could see this whole picture I would understand...When I see these things and when I experience these things, these isms in the world, I try to rise to a high consciousness...and if there's nothing I can do in an outer way than I do it in an inner way. I say, "Lord, let the highest good for all be done." Daily Word talks about the issues but always...not the same as just repeating the trouble. We pray for the inner awakenings which will take care of all this outer [external appearances]...Daily Word picks you up and gives you the strength and new vision with which to read the newspaper and to interpret it correctly without getting yourself down. We're all at different stages of consciousness...When I

do not demonstrate these things, I still do not give up hope because I know that I am growing. This life experience is like a school...I don't chart my growth by what others are or not doing, how they're manifesting their prosperity. I believe it's possible for everybody...that all good is possible, but I haven't been able to demonstrate it...It's my higher vision."

.....

"Since I've started trying to live the Truth Principles, I've been able to become detached from the emotional side of what's going on...In the end everything's going to be fair for everyone and to get hung up in it and upset about it isn't going to help, so I try to remain detached and I do put a lot of positive energy into the world. Daily Word says basically to trust in God, that good is coming out of it. There is order under the chaos...people are learning and growing out of it all. I've seen so many times when I chosen not to be happy or healthy...so I can look at other people and know if they're not, it's because something within them isn't allowing it. They're willing to suffer for some reason."

.....

"There is but one power and one presence in the universe, God...I look forward at the world situation and I say there is good in it somehow...but I try not to get caught up in these issues...God supplies and prosperity is accepting the right share of that...I believe some people must feel or have a need to experience those particular states of being, and they believe in it then they experience it."

Varying degrees of attention-switching[20] can be seen in these accounts by Daily Word participants as to how they deal with messages

originating in their environment which point to the conclusion that "all is not well." The epistemological ultimate frame, it will be recalled, creates a transcendent spiritual means of knowing; explicit in the frame is a reality/appearance term. The attention-shift[21] handles perceived contradictions or anomalies in the Unity vision of the world. Unity claims a perfect world, asserting that apparent contradictions are not actual or real, but appearances or put metaphorically, "shadows."

Not all Truth Students, as these self-reports portray, are successful in making the attention-shift (two respondents of the ten interviewed had apparent difficulty). But the majority of those interviewed seem, with facility, capable of switching when common sense perception revealed gaps in the perfect order. Where there appears to be chaos it is named Divine order; poverty, illness, lack of shortages of whatever kind, disparities and inequities are all unrealities. Categorically, they become challenges to learn, to progress in the demonstration of spiritual knowledge.

As Truth Students direct attention from whatever are the forms or situations anomalies take, recategorizing occurs which names experience in a fashion consistent with Daily Word Truth. In effect, the Truth Students (by the very designation, and by the challenge to exercise higher vision, higher consciousness) is goaded to shift attention by recategorizing. Accomplishing the shift is its own reward because to do so is to proclaim a certain mastery in the demonstration of spiritual knowledge.

Perhaps the special attention-shifting aspect of the discourse provides in fullest measure a specific strategy for coping. In turning away from the sense evidence that the perfection of the spiritual order--"all good"--is not an ever-present reality, the Daily Word participants are able to cope with personal frustrations and as well with public or social problems:

> The energy crisis is stimulating man to utilize the faculties that he has to develop the things that are there. We may exhaust some supply that was readily available, but by exhausting that we put ourselves in the position to explore deeper and find something that is even a greater power and a better source of energy...There's no 'you can't do this because you're a woman' or 'I'm limited and I can't explore my full potential because I'm black'... We're all equal and we all have the same opportunities.

"Higher vision" coming through Daily Word Truth "picks you up gives you strength." That strength, the Daily Word reader informs the listeners, comes from spiritual insight that makes it possible, in some degree, for participants to distance themselves psychologically from public crisis.

"Since I've started trying to live the Truth principles, I've been able to become detached from the emotional side of what's going on.... In the end everything's going to be fair for everyone.... There is order under the chaos." And finally, "I look at the world situation and I say there is good in it somehow... but I try not to get caught up in these issues..." Attention shifting to such perfection aids day-to-day coping significantly. "Not getting caught up" is evidence for the Truth Student of spiritual mastery.

Summary

Self-categorizing statements were solicited from some Unity School of Christianity participants. The data represents a complement to the critical work of the study and was sought to aid in the full explication of the meaning of the Unity Truth Drama. First, participants' responses indicate rational understanding of the manifest thematic content of the Daily Word discourse Ultimate Frame in agreement with my earlier representation of it.

Unity's Ultimate Framework envisages a spiritual universe composed in essence of "God Substance." This is the nature of all that exists; and all persons are heir to and have the right to express such a divine nature. Second, to give expression to spiritual heritage, one must by recognition of Truth as principle and law of the universe take responsibility to do so. Largely, the respondents in the sample appear to have accepted such a responsibility, leaving it to others to do the same. The reality they affirm here is that Truth is the way.

Third, to "Walk in the Light" is to change one's former habits of thought, to see with spiritual vision. Thus, respondents embrace a new spiritual identity as Truth Student. Ever in the process of developing as spiritual beings, of realizing their spiritual heritage -- full realization of oneness with God -- Truth students achieve redemption as they, given the motives created in the Truth Drama, transcend the frustrations, contradictions, and conflicts of social life. Those conflicts as have been pointed out are embodied in terms of natural or supernatural as the nature of being, in value terms cast as the ideal or the practical, and knowledge as either rational or mystical. Redemption comes by transcendence.

Truth Students in the sample seem able to circumvent in some degree the pangs of frustration from having to embrace the either/or choices posed in the polarities, and to deny or at least minimize the necessity of risk, failure, and condemnation encouraged in "false choices." Responses obtained in the interviews present participants embracing Truth, for them a superior means of coping with the issues of daily living. Unity's ultimate framework of a spiritual reality offers a unitary basis for ordering their lives and affairs. God, Spirit is the head and in control of all things. And as the first derivative frame in the discourse outlines, each person as Spirit's expression is enabled by this heritage to know and experience "the good."

Per the second derivative frame, all experiences to the contrary are only appearances born of incorrect thought. They are challenges to expedite spiritual growth, into, the realization of oneness with God. Such a belief aids in explaining the interruptions all human beings know in the pleasure and comfort seeking journey maintained throughout life, a journey upheld in the goals of the rhetoric -- health, happiness, and prosperity. These goals are apparent throughout the responses.

Finally, the dynamics of attention-shifting are fully present as participants sustain tenaciously, a balance between the "old self" and the "new self," always moving to actualize the special identity as Truth Students, progressing in the ability to know and perceive in a spiritual way. All of the respondents give evidence of intellectual understanding of this special strategic aspect of the rhetoric. Eight of the ten commented on their Truth experience in ways suggesting the active employment of the rhetorical strategy of the attention-switch. The interviews, then offer subjective data which allow us to comprehend something of the internal life worlds of participants in a rhetorical drama, and to comprehend the meaning of such for individual experience.

[1]Walter Lippman, Public Opinion, (New York: Free Press, The Macmillan Company, 1965) p. 9.

[2]Bryan Wilson, Religious Sects, (New York: World University Library, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), pp. 22, 30.

Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), pp. xiii, 18-20.

Orrin E. Klapp, Currents of Unrest, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), pp. 99, 92, 91, 100.

Hugh Dalyiel Duncan, Symbols in Society, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968):, pp. 21, 22.

[3]Duncan, p.50.

[4]"Change," Daily Word 112 (June 1980): 30.

[5]"Strength," Daily Word 105 (May 1976): 42.

[6]"Victorious," Daily Word 112 (June 1980): 4.

[7]"Mind of God," Daily Word 111 (November 1979): 41.

[8]Duncan, p. 22.

[9]Ibid., p. 22.

[10]C. Wendell King, Social Movements in the U.S., (New York: Random House, 1956) pp. 63-65.

[11]William H. Rueckert, Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963) p. 131.

[12]Hugh Dalziel Duncan, Communication and Social Order, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962) p. 121.

[13]Jackson J. Harrell, Symbolic Interaction as the Basis for Rhetorical Theory, Ph.D. dissertation, (The University of Kansas, 1972) p. 178.

[14]Kenneth Burke, Permanences and Change, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965) pp. 276-279.

[15]Hans Tech, Social Psychology of Social Movements, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1965) p. 11.

[16]Harrell, p. 178.

[17]Duncan, Symbols, pp. 44-48, 100.

[18]William R. Brown, "Attention and the Rhetoric of Social Intervention," Quarterly Journal of Speech 68 (February 1982): 26.

[19] Ibid., p. 18.

[20]Ibid.; see also by Brown "Ideology as Communication Process," Quarterly Journal of Speech 64 (April 1978: 123-130.

[21]Ibid.